

E-SPORTS

+
Gamer
Shape

Training for life

MATT HWU had long been a fan of e-sports, but he knew its culture bred poor habits. Players often practiced for 14-hour stretches, slumped at a desk, hands glued to a mouse and a keyboard, pausing only to inhale Taco Bell. This is especially true among pros, who generally live in group houses with few outside responsibilities. That's why Hwu, 29, a physical therapist and trainer, contacted Counter Logic Gaming (CLG) about working with its players.

CLG is a pioneer in the industry. In 2015 it hired a former football coach to encourage teamwork among players who'd largely been practicing alone. CLG's management had already started to feel



that fitness and nutrition were the frontier in e-sports. They worked with Hwu to create a role and an approach that would help their roughly 30 players who compete in five different games.

In January 2016, CLG made Hwu one of the first performance coaches in professional e-sports. Andrew Tye came aboard as CLG's head chef a month later. Together, the two have crafted a nutrition

plan—high in protein, low in white flour—and Hwu has mapped out an exercise regimen to improve performance and prevent injury. At the CLG compound near Los Angeles, timeouts to eat lunch and dinner—with actual food—and participate in full-body workouts are encouraged. New members are shocked to learn that practice can last as few as eight hours per day.

At first, Hwu faced skepticism. "Some of the players are 16," he says, "and they think I'm just going to be another parent coming in to tell them to sit up." So he emphasizes that his goal is the same as theirs: winning. And given the intelligence of his subjects, a few peer-reviewed studies go a long way. "In the end it's an endurance sport," Hwu says.

Hwu hopes his lessons endure beyond the playing career. Most gamers wash out by their mid-20s, due perhaps in part to burnout and a minuscule decline in reflex speed. Then they enter the real world, where they're likely to sit at a desk, hands glued to a mouse and keyboard for hours on end. "This is a lifestyle," Hwu says. "If we help them early, it's going to benefit them later."

—Stephanie Apstein

EDGE

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Within Reach

CLG performance coach Matt Hwu posts e-sports-specific exercises on YouTube. His favorite focuses on developing good posture. It helps anyone who spends time sitting at a computer.

For more athlete training profiles and tips, go to SI.com/edge



Step 1

Clasp hands behind head, elbows forward. Rotate elbows until they point outward and the chest rises.



Step 2

Stretch hands up while inhaling. Hold for a count, then lower the hands, keeping elbows out.



Step 3

Exhale while rotating elbows to start position. Do five or six reps every 45 minutes of play.